

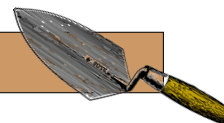


Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



Volume 22 Issue 1

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Chairman's Report

"Digging Deeper" got off to a storming start last month with our drop-in event at the Tourist Information Centre. This attracted lots of interest and Martin Railton was able to add a large number of names to his contact list. We also received fresh invitations to investigate fields and gardens in and around Appleby. We will probably schedule another similar event over the summer as interest builds.

Digging Deeper followers have also been extremely quick to grab places on the Palaeography and Geophysics workshops scheduled for March and April and these are both now fully booked. If you feel you've missed out, please make sure Martin Railton has your contact details (you can do this on-line via the Appleby Archaeology Facebook page). It may be possible to repeat these courses later in the year and, if you're on the contact-list, you'll be first in line to receive early information. Registration will also get you details of plans for this summer's initial fieldwork activities.

It's going to be a busy Summer! We'll still be running our usual evening and weekend summer outings and, as a start, you may be interested to note details of the first of these an opportunity to inspect the archaeology of the Warcop Firing Range (see Programme section at the end of this Newsletter). We're also working on a plan to visit the Eskdalemuir Prehistoric trail. Last year's talk on Rheged sparked an interest in Scottish archaeology and I believe this will be Appleby Archaeology's first foray across the border. Scary stuff indeed, but I expect we shall survive!

Martin Joyce

Editorial Footnote: if you are looking for something archaeologically nostalgic, try Time Team's Season 10, Episode 13 excavation of Appleby Goal (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvgizObuFZo>) and the escape of William Den-

Checkered mittens - The Medieval Wool Industry

Sheep have long been at the centre of life in Cumbria, and never more so than in the monastic period of Medieval England. The Domesday Survey records that there were more sheep in England in 1281 than all other forms of livestock put together. And the wool was valuable. Between the years 1189 and 1199, monasteries contributed no less than 50,000 sacks of wool to the ransom of Richard I.

At a lecture last Autumn, Harry Hawkins held the attention of a large audience of Appleby Archaeological Group members on the subject of **"Monks, Shepherds, Sheep and Wool"**. He started by explaining that sheep were probably introduced to Britain by early prehistoric settlers from the Middle East. These sheep would not have been the large, white-fleeced beasts we are familiar with today, but rather, small brown animals similar to a modern Soay sheep. These were probably more important for their milk and meat than their wool at first with the wool being "pulled" rather than shorn.

However, by the time Vikings were making their presence felt, wool production was happening on an industrial scale. Quite surprisingly, the sails on Viking long ships were made from wool with a large warship requiring 1.5 tonnes or more. Clearly a considerable number of sheep and daunting amount of labour would have been needed to service the Viking fleet.

But it was with the arrival of the Normans and the



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establishment of the Monasteries that sheep-farming finally began to evolve into the industry we see today. Breeding sheep commercially for wool had grown enormously by 1200. The largest producers were the monasteries. The Cistercians (White Monks) were the pioneers closely followed by the Premonstratensians (White Canons) and the English Gilbertines. By 1297 some 50% of the nation's wealth was derived from wool. It certainly formed nearly all of the country's export earnings

However Harry went on to explain that breeding sheep and harvesting of their wool was only part of the larger industry. The associated trades of cloth manufacture and the dealerships that linked producers with purchasers was just as important. Until the middle of the 14th century, the wool trade was handled by Flemish merchants from the cities of Bruges, Ghent and Ypres using sophisticated financial techniques. The monasteries were quick to see the advantages offered by borrowing money against the value of future crops and dealers were equally quick to supply such services. Typical of these dealers was William Goldington who was based in Appleby in the late 13th Century. He would advance cash at a premium – and take possession of stock at a discount should circumstances lead to default. It was not uncommon for whole monasteries to go bankrupt in times of poor harvest or disease.



Books were written about the management of flocks. In a book *"Le Bon Berger"* written by Jean le Brie in 1379, shepherds were advised that *"First of all, the lambs, young and tender should be treated kindly and without violence"* and that *"The shepherd should be of good morals, should avoid the tavern, bawdy houses and all dishonest places..."* and *"In the winter the shepherd should have mittens to keep his hands from the cold. He shouldn't buy these mittens*

but should skilfully make them. When they are checked they are even prettier". And much more in the same vein!

Relics of these industries are still to be seen everywhere in the landscape today. The wool industry may not be what it once was but sheep continue to be the dominant livestock animal in Cumbria, giving the county much of its character.

Harry was warmly thanked for his lecture.

A medieval Christmas in Appleby

Life for most people in medieval England was hard and never more so than in the rural North, where land was difficult to manage, climate was harsh and proximity to Scotland brought its own special problems. But Christmas in medieval Appleby, as elsewhere, would surely have provided a brief opportunity for rich and poor alike to forget their problems. Or would it?

Appleby Archaeology's January AGM was enlivened by a presentation by the Red Wyvern historical re-enactment society on the theme of "Christmas in medieval Appleby". Our journey into the past was directed by James Hodgson, leader of the Wyverns, dressed for the evening as a "man at arms". He invited us first of all to inspect his desperately inadequate gear. It was a cold evening but he was wearing a sort of loose, open-necked shirt, woolen trousers, and a curious cod-piece. The wool trousers, he said, were unbelievably itchy though, underneath, he said, he was wearing linen braes that made life vaguely bearable. We did not envy him.

First James introduced us to his colleague the Reeve, the Lord's representative in matters that required consultation with the "common people". He was wearing something a little more civilised (not to mention warmer), as befit his rank. His role, he said, was critical at Christmas – not least because it was the Lord who would be expected to dispense the Christmas feast (in return for payment of the Michaelmas Day rent of course, not to mention the 'boon hen' – an Appleby tradition that entitled him additionally to claim a hen from each tenant).

Then we met the Cook, who apologised for her appearance as a "loose woman" in consequence of the arthritic fingers that prevented her from fully tightening the laces on her bodice. She assured us that she was usually perfectly "straight-laced". The Cook waxed fondly upon her memories of roast goose, woodcock and the wonderful pie made of all the various bits that went into a venison pie – ears, intestines etc. She loved a bit of *"umble pie"* she assured us. She remembered too the fun that might be found at Christmas – snowball fights and skating on the frozen river, the hunting and the special privilege that permitted a carefully selected peasant *"together with one other"* to attend the Lord's feast in the castle on New Years Day *"for the space of two candles"*. Happy days indeed.

And finally, we met an altogether sterner gentleman, the Swordsman, who reminded us that Appleby sometimes had visitors from Scotland who did not believe in peace and goodwill Scottish reivers who had

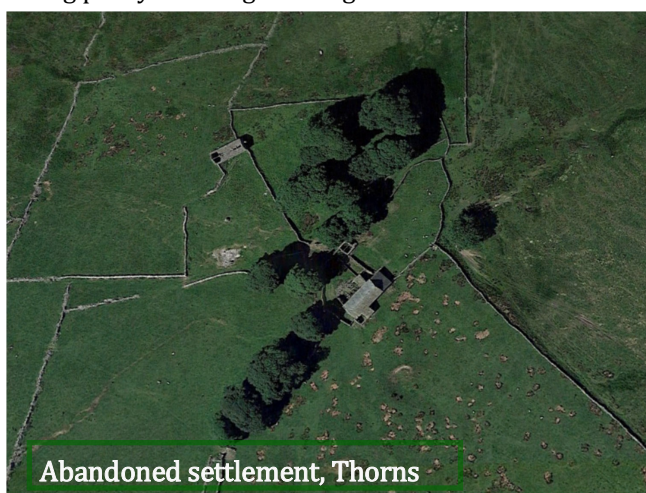
besieged the castle four times, no less, between 1314 and 1322? The castle successfully held out on each occasion of course, but the town was burnt to the ground.

And then there were 'reminiscences' about the battles and escapades Appleby had enjoyed in support of its liege-lord, Lord Clifford. To the dismay of Appleby Archaeology members still digesting their tea, a "*field surgery*" box was opened to reveal a grisly collection of trepanning equipment and devices for amputating fingers, hands, and whole legs. The Black Death was also mentioned and that other perennial nuisance floods that have always plagued life in the village.

By this time it was clear the spirit of Christmas had passed on and it was time to go home although everyone agreed that it had been an educational, if sobering experience. The Red Wyverns can be contacted at redwyvernssociety@gmail.com if you want protection from those Scots

Thorns Through Time.

The Appleby Archaeology Group gathered one night in December to hear a lecture by Dr. David Johnson about the history of an abandoned settlement near Ribblesdale named Thorns. This had been explored during a two year research project forming part of a four year conservation programme, variously funded and supported by the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership, led by Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Yorkshire Dales Landscape Research Trust. The research project was led by Dr Johnson. Interestingly, part of his responsibilities consisted of introducing volunteers to new archaeological skills and techniques such as geophysical surveys and stabilizing partly standing buildings.



Abandoned settlement, Thorns

Thorns is a deserted upland farming settlement in a sheltered green hollow at some 290m elevation near Ribblesdale. It is surrounded by mature trees which provide shelter from the weather typical of those altitudes. The first record of the settlement was documented in Furness Abby archives dating to AD 1189-90. Soil samples suggest that even 800 years ago, the founders must have been aware of the advantage in establishing a new settlement on an area of well-

drained land overlying limestone. This is reflected by the soil of the in-by fields which is sweet and fertile, contrasting to that in the outlying fields immediately surrounding the settlement where it is poorly drained and acidic. The site includes the remains of a kiln for producing lime used to improve soil quality.

At the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries (early sixteenth century) the settlement comprised six houses occupied by tenants. One of those examined as part of a study of vernacular architecture, may have survived from that time, judging by the thickness of the walls and evidence of cruck construction. Only one house was still occupied at the time of the 1881 census and ten years later the settlement appears to have been abandoned after 700 years of continuous occupation. Carefully selected areas around some of the buildings were targeted for limited excavation to assess covered mound-like features and gauge their purpose. All finds were recorded and logged.

As well as studying the buildings, Dr Johnson and his team of volunteers also recorded the archaeology of the surrounding area. A survey of farm buildings,



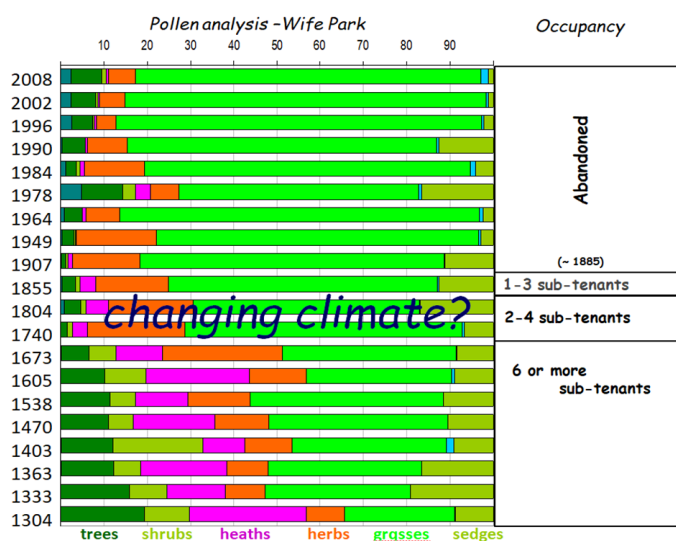
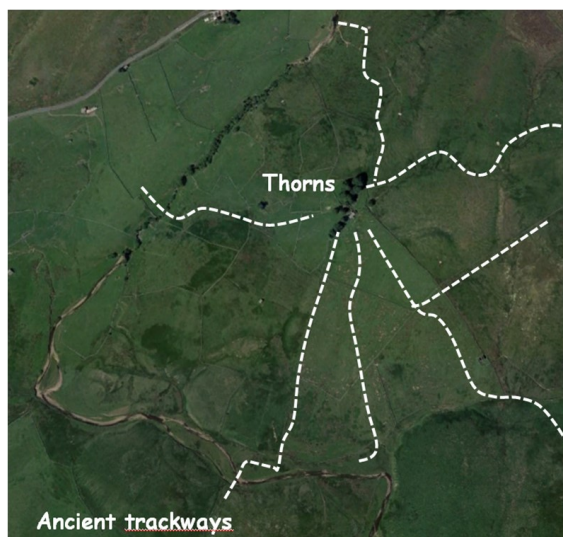
excavating Thorns

and reconstructing old buildings?



dry stone walls and previously unrecorded boundary banks and ditches was included in this work. The age of individual dry stone walls was deduced from the shape and style of construction and location of both walls and ancient banks and ditches was recorded for posterity.

Although now deserted, it is clear Thorns was once a busy crossroad for travellers roaming across the fells with documentary evidence of ten routes converging on the isolated settlement. Thorns would have provided welcome shelter for people on foot and horseback in the days before metalled roads. Even today, the site has a wonderful atmosphere. This can be experienced by walking over the old packhorse bridge across Thorns Gill into the peaceful hollow with signs of 800 years habitation all about.



Thorns was finally abandoned circa 1885 at a time of changing climate suggested by pollen analysis

In closing, Dr Johnson hoped that those attending might be inspired to visit this remarkable place. There are three public rights of way converging on the settlement. These are all footpaths crossing private land and visitors are asked to respect the landowner's legal rights and not stray from them.

Copies of a spiral bound, 300 page, illustrated report of the Thorns Project can be purchased through the Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust website at a cost of £13 including postage.

Medieval lead tokens from Holme Cultram

Kate Rennicks gave a talk about medieval lead tokens found at Holme Cultram Abby to the Appleby Archaeological Group on the 14th February. Holme Cultram Abbey in northern Cumbria was founded by Cistercian monks in 1150. Archaeological excavation of the Abby site in 2015 uncovered over 40 lead tokens in the Chapter House area, some 13-16mm in diameter with nine different designs and a variety of motifs. Kate went on to describe their

commercial and social significance in northern Britain and the wider region. Patricia Shaw's report will be published in the next newsletter.



Spring Events

Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group

June Hill

Thursday 14th March

June Hill, Chairman of Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group, will explain what CVBG is, what it does, and why. Founded in 2013, CVBG aims to increase the understanding and enjoyment of Cumbria's rich and hugely varied wealth of traditional architecture: from medieval defensive, high-status buildings of the Border region, to farmhouses and townhouses of the 17th and 18th centuries.

A Roman Bath house in Stanwix

Frank Giecco

Thursday 11th April

After Carlisle Cricket Club's pavilion was badly damaged by the floods of 2015 it was decided to relocate to higher ground on the other side of the pitch. However, preliminary work on the footings for the new building showed there was something here of unusual interest. Trial trenches produced Roman remains and the ensuing excavation revealed the hitherto totally unsuspected remnants of a classic Roman bath house.

Burton DMV on Warcop Range

Saturday 25th May

Possible medieval and post-medieval settlement earthwork remains of the former village of Burton were surveyed in 1997 in the area adjacent to Burton Hall. The site lies within the Warcop Range and a tour has been arranged by special arrangement for members of Appleby Archaeology Group. Booking essential - contact Martin Railton at m.railton@cadrus.co.uk with details of your car registration and names of any passengers to claim a space.